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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal issue focus on adolescent literature. Topics covered in the articles include: (1) teaching adolescent literature about minorities to majority group students, (2) death in adolescent literature, (3) trends in German youth literature, and (4) female identity in the young adult novel. In addition, the journal issue contains discussions of their books by Harry Mazer and Norma Fox Mazer, and reviews of films for use in English classrooms. (FL)

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The ALAN Review

Assembly on Literature for Adolescents — National Council of Teachers of English

Vol. 8, No. 1 Fall 1980

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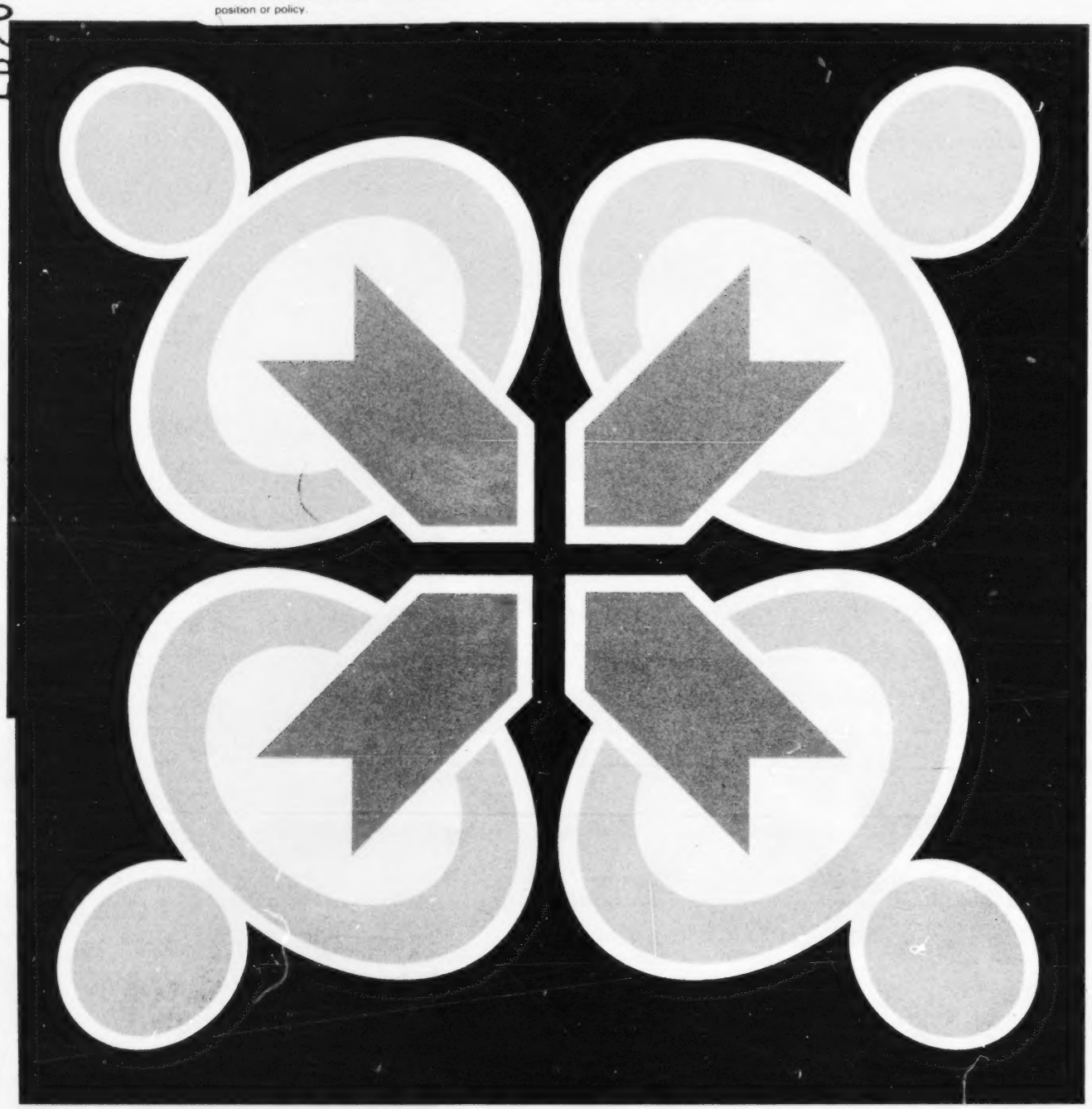

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The Last Mission: Truth and Fiction

Harry Mazer

IN 1943 I WAS 17 YEARS OLD AND SO eager to get into the Army into the war against Hitler that I volunteered for the Air Force and then had to beg my mother to sign the papers. It was a war we all believed in. We were Jews, and we hated Hitler and Fascism. It was the best of all possible wars, a war of righteousness, of good against evil, of right against wrong.

I didn't want my parents to come to Penn Station to say goodbye to me. I didn't want them fussing over me. I wasn't a boy anymore. I was a man—that's what going into the Army meant in 1943. My parents came, of course. I was kissed and hugged and made to promise that I'd send a postcard home every week. My mother handed me a box of cookies, fruit, a midget salami. I was impatient. I wanted them to go so I could start my new life. Only as the train started moving did I sense the way all partings are charged with intimations of death.

The train was filled with young volunteers, most of them, like me 18-year-old boys, all of us with our dreams of becoming flying officers. Just being in the Air Force automatically made us feel like heroes. We'd all passed rigorous tests. We were certified bright and healthy with 20-20 vision. We had an unquenchable belief in our cause and in our own invulnerability. Death was not going to touch us.

My dreams of being an officer, a pilot, were never realized. Instead I became a waist gunner. Almost as good. Now I dreamed of shooting down Nazi planes. I flew 26 missions in Europe and never got to do any brave or heroic deeds. I never once fired my gun. I was scared every time we flew.

Planes were being shot down all the time, men wounded, men killed, but somehow our crew kept coming back intact. There were eight of us. We became intimate, close as a family. My best friend was Mike Brennan, another 18 year old from the Bronx. We talked about double dating when we got home.

On our 26th mission we flew over Pilzen, Czechoslovakia, to bomb the Skoda Munitions Works. We missed our target, turned over the target again, and were hit. I saw Mike, who was our radio operator, frozen in the door of the radio room. He never made it out of the plane. Only three of us parachuted. Two of the three survived. No one who remained in the plane lived.

That was April 25, 1945. That was the last mission flown by the 8th Air Force over Europe. Two weeks later the war in Europe ended.

Those days are far behind me now. Other wars have come and gone. Other stories have been told. But my story has haunted me all these years. Questions remain unanswered. Why had I survived? Why had the others died? Did we have to fly that last mission? Was there any meaning to what we'd done? Any meaning to those deaths, to all the other deaths? It was to think about these questions, perhaps to find some answers, that I wrote *The Last Mission.* ■

Up In Seth's Room: Some Thoughts

Norma Fox Mazer

WHEN I SET OUT TO WRITE *UP IN Seth's Room,* I was faced not only with the usual questions a novelist asks herself, but some other questions that had to do with sex and the young. To put it succinctly: do they or don't they?

Had I written this book while I was growing up, the answer would have been easy. Nice girls didn't. They didn't do it, they didn't talk about it, they didn't even *think* about it. Like the Girl Scout pledge, we were meant to be pure in body and mind.

We all wanted to be nice girls, and most of us tried valiantly, despite our longing and curiousity, to do what was considered "right." Some of us didn't succeed, but we only whispered about that.

Things have changed. No one is whispering anymore. Everyone talks about sex, everyone writes about sex, and everyone, it seems, is "doing it." And if they're not doing it, they're certainly reading about it. In a fair number of novels for young people, the characters not only consummate their relationships, but with far fewer problems than most of us adults.

The message is that sex is here to stay, and the young should have it and enjoy it as well as anyone else: sex is good, sex is nice, sex is easy. Well, yes . . . and no.

The young are full of passion for a sexual life; but does that have to mean "doing it"? Don't we use the word *sex* in too narrow a way? As if sex is simply a quicker way of saying that cumbersome word *intercourse*? As if sex equals intercourse? But of course there's a great deal more to sex than this. This is something young people need to know.

Intercourse, the ultimate intimacy, catapults two people into a relationship that demands a high degree of responsibility and responsiveness. And for adolescents this comes at the very time when they are most changeable, volatile, vulnerable; most easily bruised. I'd like to see kids wait, not for sex, but for intercourse.

Am I reverting back to the old good-girls-don't double standard? No way. I hope the days of girls thinking of themselves as "giving in" or "holding out" are gone forever. I hope we've moved beyond a sexual definition of female character. I think sex is something to be decided between the people involved. But I also think that in our zeal to liberate the young — girls especially — we've overlooked some truths.

The world still belongs to men, and in this man's world boys continue to think about scoring, while girls are caught between their own real feelings and the dread of being used. The pressure is still on girls, albeit in a new way. Before, it was, Don't do it!, and now it's, DO IT! Either way, the girl is caught — and, in fact, the boy as well.

Liberated sexuality still doesn't mean choice. Still doesn't leave our kids with room for individuality, for growth, for hesitation, for exploration, for finding things out slowly and for themselves.

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Teaching Minority Adolescent Literature to Majority Students

Leila Christenbury, James Madison University

WHETHER OR NOT TO TEACH MINORity adolescent literature in a secondary English class is a dead issue; there are, unequivocally, enough excellent examples to silence critics regarding its artistic merit, and there are, moreover, too many compelling moral and ethical issues at stake to ignore the genre. Yet, for majority students raised in a predominantly majority culture, reading minority adolescent literature can be a different experience. In addition, some prospective majority English teachers from homogeneous backgrounds, ignorant of minority culture and unaccustomed to a pluralistic society, are understandably hesitant about dealing with literature which is geared to or which deals exclusively with minorities. With these problems in mind, my adolescent literature class discussed the teaching and reading of minority adolescent literature and especially considered the questions of selection and readership.

The class was composed of senior English majors, and the students were, with one exception, white Midwesterners from rural or small-town backgrounds whose experience with minorities and minority literature was limited. In class we discussed their fears and hesitations about teaching minority adolescent literature. In the course of the exploration, the single minority student, a young black woman originally from New York City, made an observation which struck us all and which moved the conversation from concern with the teaching of minority adolescent literature to concern with the majority student who would read that literature. In the discussions devoted to Black Literature (we also examined the teaching of literature dealing with Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, and Native Americans), the student observed that while she understood her white fellows' trepidations about teaching minority, in this case black, adolescent literature, and was sympathetic, she was more concerned about the effect of that literature on majority students.

The young woman stated that she would prefer that Black Literature, as it is often represented by adolescent novels, simply not be taught. The student's reasoning was that many black adolescent novels portray blacks in such a narrow, sensationalist light that some majority students, guided by majority teachers, would surely emerge with a distorted view of Black Americans: specifically, majority students in rural or small-town Midwestern situations would not have the opportunity to meet a variety of blacks and would probably conclude that the picture drawn in their novels would be entirely representative of all blacks. Thus, without proper attention to the questions of selection and readership, the student felt that the indiscriminate teaching of minority adolescent literature to majority students could, in some situations, be disastrous.

The student's point was a salient one. While the class agreed in later discussions that good black adolescent literature, like all good literature, reflects transcendent human, not merely minority dilemmas, and thus could be successfully taught from that vantage point by majority teachers to majority students, her objection was not lightly pushed aside.

Black exploitation is a factor in our society. In movies and on TV the black man or woman is often stereotyped as loud, argumentative, unemployed, and engaged in illicit, illegal, or immoral activities. As in the media, in adolescent literature there is a wide array of books which explore black teenagers in street gangs, abusing drugs and alcohol, living in extreme poverty, and largely bereft of decent adult role models. Despite their other fine—and eminently defensible—qualities, many adolescent novels certainly depict depressing ghetto environments in which black youngsters struggle to survive in a hostile and dangerous world. In their struggle, these same youngsters occasionally engage in questionable, albeit understandable, activities and also encounter life-threatening situations. If this kind of black adolescent literature is all that sheltered majority students experience, then they may well assume that most blacks are similar to what they have encountered in novels. As Shelia Schwartz puts it, "I would not recommend all ethnic literature for the secondary school. I would prefer the well-written works that bring people closer together rather than those that highlight the exotic, brutal, and freakish" (Schwartz, p. 61).

To illustrate more specifically, one can turn to a single author, Walter Dean Myers, two of whose works offer an interesting study in light of the previous discussion. Published in 1975, *Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff* is a stark contrast to Myers' later work, the 1978 *It Ain't All for Nothin'*. While both these books are written well and feature strong portraits of blacks *Fast Sam* is probably far more appropriate for majority students to read and study than is *It Ain't All for Nothin'*.

To summarize briefly, in *It Ain't All for Nothin'* young Tippy lives with his religious and caring grandmother who has raised the boy since his mother's death and his father's abandonment. When Grandma Carrie becomes ill and has to enter the hospital for an extended period, Tippy must move in with his father Lonnie. Lonnie lives in a barren, shabby apartment and regularly robs for a living. He does not provide any stability for his son and, while he uses a welfare check provided for Tippy's support, Lonnie gives the boy little money and often fails to keep sufficient food in the apartment. Tippy is kept up until all hours of the night by his father's alternately amorous and illegal activities. He is forced to aid in a robbery, is frequently slapped and beaten, and even is threatened by his father with death. In an effort to cope with his new and chaotic surroundings, Tippy tries to make friends, but he eventually slips into heavy drinking. At one point, he drunkenly collapses on a public street and is rescued by a concerned black bus driver, Mr. Roland, who takes him home and tries to help him. Yet, Tippy's situation is not so easily salvaged:

With his grandmother incapacitated and Mr. Roland a distant and unfamiliar figure, Tippy must return to Lonnie and deal, as best he can, with an untenable situation. Desperate for his father's love and yet possessed of a strong sense of responsibility, Tippy, in a scene, turns his father over to the police.

While Tippy eventually moves in with Mr. Roland and while still in jail Lonnie reconciles with his son, *It Ain't All for Nothin'* is hardly an encouraging tale. Whereas the story of Tippy's courage is inspiring, and surely many black youngsters face equally difficult circumstances in their lives, presenting this novel to some groups of majority youngsters would be unfortunate. The vision of a chaotic world, largely peopled, with the exception of Grandma Carrie and Mr. Roland, by blacks who steal, get drunk, and take drugs, is unrepresentative of blacks as a whole and would surely give some majority students a distorted picture of black life and blacks in general. In addition, the characters who are outside of the mainstream of society seem to have the most immediate control over Tippy and are able, within their sphere of influence, to hurt and dominate the child; it is only through Tippy's incredible act of heroism that he is freed from his nightmare world.

In contrast to *It Ain't All for Nothin'* is *Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff.* The latter presents a group of black youngsters who, while dealing with some difficult aspects of their culture and circumstances, are also well-adjusted, loved, and ruled by a strong sense of community and friendship. While the young people in the novel deal with the police, fights, gangs, and drug abuse, they are simultaneously operating from a powerful sense of mutual commitment. They are also guided by parents who, refreshingly, behave and talk very much like all parents, black or white, and who give their children not only sufficient material well-being but also stability and affection.

STUFF, THE NOVEL'S NARRATOR, IS A young adolescent who moves into a new neighborhood and finds lasting friends. He and his cohorts, notably Fast Sam and Cool Clyde, concern themselves with school, dance contests, playing basketball, making up and breaking up with girls, going to parties, and the normal round of adolescent activities. But what distinguishes this novel from *It Ain't All for Nothin'* is the strong bonding between the adolescents and between the adolescents and their parents. Concerned about their friends' difficulties in life, the youngsters band together to form the 116th Street Good People, a club devoted to helping others in need. BB, a charter member of the club, explains:

> We're talking about being corny and caring for each other, so let's be corny all the way. I care for all of you, and I'm not ashamed of it, you know. I don't mind being called the Good People and I don't care if anyone else in the world thinks it's corny. If I get some people in my corner, some people who are going to care for me, I don't care what anybody else thinks. (p. 65)

With this philosophy in mind, when Clyde's father dies, his friends come to mourn with him; when Gloria's father leaves her family, the group visits and comforts her; when Carnation Charley gets into difficulties regarding a drug deal and also nearly overdoses, Stuff and Clyde rescue him and take him home.

Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff admittedly has some improbably heart-warming moments: Sam and Clyde, disguised as a girl, win the local dance contest; the group's basketball team wins the championship; Sam receives a full athletic scholarship. Yet the novel is not unredeemingly optimistic or sugary sweet. When Stuff and his friends try to stop a purse snatcher and when they rescue Carnation Charley, they are themselves taken to the police station; Clyde's failing grades only rise to C's, and he must attend summer school; Carnation Charley is killed trying to rob a store; Gloria's father does not return to the family. Stuff is also not unrealistic about the effect of the 116th Street Good People club, remarking, regarding Carnation Charley, that "'I kept thinking that the club hadn't helped him at all. We had saved his life but I wasn't even sure that was really helping" (p. 140). Yet, he affirms, "We all need Good People clubs" (p. 158), surely the strongest point of the novel.

The issue is not whether *Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff,* is a better novel than *It Ain't All for Nothin'*; the issue is not whether black adolescent novels which deal with harsh realities of life should be wholly excluded from the classroom. The issue is, however, that teaching novels such as *It Ain't All for Nothin'* to majority youngsters from restricted environments can do far more harm than good. Some majority adolescents, reading a novel which portrays minorities as predominantly poor, intensely troubled, and engaged in illegal activities, might well conclude that that is a realistic, representative portrait of all minorities. While it is surely possible to discuss *It Ain't All for Nothin'* as a stereotypic novel, perhaps the more positive step would be to consider *Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff* which, as Dr. Rosalie Black Kiah, a student of adolescent literature, states, is a novel which "reflects universal experience." (Dr. Kiah has kindly suggested seven similar black adolescent literature novels which are listed at the end of this article).

Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff portrays blacks in families and with their friends as warm human beings who while dealing with a difficult environment — not to mention the usual problems of growing up — bond with each other in love and support. While there are hard times in *Fast Sam,* there is also a noticeable lack of sensationalism and even of despair. In contrast, *It Ain't All for Nothin'* might imply to a majority reader that only through heroic efforts can a black youngster's life be made even bearable and, in addition, that those heroic efforts must be largely made alone.

In *Teaching Adolescent Literature,* Shelia Schwartz calls for "honest pictures of black people" which will "dispel stereotypical ideas about Blacks"

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Death in Adolescent Fiction: The Journey to Acceptance

Patti McWhorter, Cedar Shoals High School, Athens, Georgia

IN THE PREFACE TO THE FIRST CHAPTER of her book, *Beat the Turtle Drum* Constance Green shares a verse by Ian Serraillier, the source of her title:

> O dance along the silver sand,
> And beat the turtle drum,
> That youth may last forever
> And sorrow never come.

This is a short, bittersweet thought, yet one that so aptly touches the reality of our own mortality. The acceptance of mortality and the inevitability of death is perhaps the most difficult realization which adolescents must confront. Consequently, adolescent novels focused on death or containing the death of a significant character inevitably are somewhat "therapeutic" in design. Every adolescent novel does not have to show a Hollywood version of a young protagonist boldly marching forward, shoulders erect, to overcome loss and grief. Rather, each novel can be as different as the people who create them, as long as, in dealing with the death, the author allows the character most directly involved to grow emotionally as a result of the experience.

Adolescent novels dealing with death contain some common elements. There are those adolescent novels in which the character learns from the death itself, the experiences related to the death. Then there are those novels in which the character, in retrospect, is a better, stronger person in some way for having known the dead person. Finally, it would appear that many adolescent characters must learn about death by watching the adult reactions around them. Though general in nature, these three categories provide a loose framework in which to structure a discussion of adolescent novels containing death as a central issue. As it is with categorization of any sort, many of the novels seem to contain more than one of the elements. It should also be noted at this point that the novels used as examples are those in which only human characters die — not animals, whose relationships with adolescents provide material for another extensive discussion.

Death as Experience

The witnessing of death is a self-expanding experience in and of itself. To the adolescent, death is sometimes an unreal, distant experience, one which few adults, much less young people, are prepared to face. An experience with death for the adolescent character is often an initiation of sorts. In *Dreamland Lake* by Richard Peck, Bryan Bishop, the young protagonist, witnesses three deaths. The first is his discovery of an old vagrant's body, the second is an automobile accident, and the third is the bizarre death of a peer. Most specifically, Bryan's experiences with these three instances of death slowly develop into an awakening of his consciousness. Bryan is able to see himself clearly for the first time, how he has been manipulated by the character he has selected as his "best" friend. With the trio of deaths as a backdrop, Bryan comes to the startling realization that he has been manipulated by his friend and is in some way indirectly responsible for the death of their classmate. Thus, it is the death itself, and not the actual dead characters who have the impact on Bryan. For Bryan Bishop, death is a catharsis of sorts, the ultimate reality that releases a deeper sense of himself as an individual.

Doris Buchanan Smith's *A Taste of Blackberries* is a much gentler treatment of the lesson the adolescent or pre-adolescent learns from death. The young narrator in this book struggles to accept the finality of the death of his best friend, the result of a seemingly insignificant bee sting. The young protagonist realizes that Jamie is gone, but he struggles to place the experience in some perspective. Although Doris Smith has established the friendship between the narrator and Jamie, the narrator is revealed as having developed a surer sense of reality as a result of witnessing death, not as a result of the friendship of the two boys.

A third example of a novel in which a young character begins to mature as she faces a death is Norma Klein's, *Confessions of an Only Child.* Antonia does not really want a new baby in the house, but she is totally unprepared for the baby's death. She learns of the uniqueness of each human being when she faces her mother's pregnancy and has to accept the fact that baby Brendan is not the baby that died previously. Antonia does watch the adults in her life react to the loss of the baby, but it is her personal inner struggle, however simple, that provides the ultimate awareness, a beginning of comprehending the finality of death.

Bryan Bishop, Antonia, and Jamie's best friend share a common experience. In spite of the fact that the ages, circumstances, and complexity of plots differ, each of these characters has grown, gaining some degree of objectivity in an intensely personal experience with death.

Death of a Significant Character

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Peterson provides a complete example of the second category of adolescent novels dealing with death. In this powerful novel, Jesse Aarons becomes a more complete person as a result of his friendship with Leslie Burke, a young girl who moves into his West Virginia community. When Leslie dies, Jesse is not able initially to accept her absence. With the help of his father, however, he is able to overcome the shock and disbelief and move to another level of understanding. It is not Leslie's death that has the final impact on Jesse, it is Leslie herself, the persor who gave Jesse a

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greater appreciation of himself as a person with dreams and talents worth recognition. Jesse accepts the inevitability of death, although he recognizes that he will miss Leslie. She gave Jesse experiences, memories, and values that death could not destroy.

Jenny Pennoyer in Nora Fox Mazer's *A Figure of Speech* is the only one in her family who seems to appreciate their grandfather Carl Pennoyer. As the family struggles to find a comfortable retirement home for him, Jenny watches her grandfather lose his vitality until he miraculously snaps back to his former active self. When Carl Pennoyer decides to return to his farm to live what time he has left, Jenny accompanies him. It is there that he dies, apparently of his own will. Jenny and her grandfather, as it often is with the young and very old, fill empty spaces in each other's lives. Jenny, like Jesse Aarons, makes it through the actual loss of her grandfather, coming to understand that his death did not take away the self-value he had given her. If anything, Carl's death makes Jenny a stronger person.

In *A Summer to Die* by Lois Lowry, thirteen-year-old Meg Chalmers has a vivacious and beautiful sister, Molly, but there is a lack of understanding between the two. The gap between them widens when they have to share a room. Molly grows increasingly touchy, as constant nosebleeds plague her – nosebleeds that foretell the inevitable. Just when Meg seems to have a perspective on her relationship to Molly, she realizes that Molly will not return from her last trip to the hospital. Meg is forced to look back, to sort through the images of Molly as she wants to remember her. With that retrospective glimpse comes a more complete Meg Chalmers – one who accepts the losses in life, as well as welcoming the beginnings. Her development as an individual takes place as a direct result of her relationship with her sister.

Bridge to Terabithia, A Figure of Speech, and *A Summer to Die* are only three of many adolescent novels in which young protagonists become stronger individuals because of their relationship with a character who dies. The point, however, is clear. The adolescent reader learns that everyone gains something from interaction with other human beings. Death cannot destroy the impact of loving, strong relationships between people.

The Reactions of Adults

The final category into which other adolescent novels focusing upon death seem to fall are those in which the young characters learn something about themselves from an experience involving death by witnessing the adult reactions around them. Adults placed in these situations are usually portrayed as weak, ineffective, unable to accept the inevitability of death. Three novels that are clear examples of this category are *Grover* by Vera and Bill Cleaver, *Ronnie and Rosey* by Judie Angell, and *Beat the Turtle Drum* by Constance Greene.

Grover, whose mother commits suicide, is faced not only with his own sense of loss but with a father who cannot accept his wife's death. Unable to work out his feelings with the help of his father, Grover is forced to try to find some reason for his mother's death. When the housekeeper tries to pack away his mother's belongings, Grover's father flies into a rage, returning the room to its former arrangement. In spite of the lack of support Grover receives from his father, there is an element of hope in the end that things will work out for them. Grover does mature by working through his fears and confusion following his mother's death, but he has to do so without the support of his father in those first few weeks after the death.

IN *RONNIE AND ROSEY* BY JUDIE ANGELL, Ronnie faces a situation similar to that of Grover. When Ronnie's father is killed in an automobile accident, her mother loses all sense of purpose and direction. Misinterpreting Ronnie's friendship with Robert Rose, Mrs. Rachman develops into an overbearing, possessive mother unable to face life without her husband. Unlike the interior conflict of *Grover,* there is open hostility between Ronnie and her mother that ends in a painful confrontation. The future for them is more clearly spelled out.

When her sister dies as a result of a fall from a tree, Kate, in *Beat The Turtle Drum,* is also faced with parents who cannot help her deal with death by virtue of their own inability to accept the loss of Joss, their youngest daughter. Kate observes her parents weaknesses – her father's excessive drinking, her mother's reliance upon sedatives – and acknowledges her need for them to help her through the "right now," the immediacy of their loss. Of the three novels in this category, Kate voices most clearly what Grover and Ronnie experience also – the need for the adults in their lives to provide them some sense of order to life after their loss.

An encounter with death for the adolescent character is a self-awakening experience whatever the circumstances. The message these novels deliver to the young reader has to be that life is worth continuing even after the loss of special people. It is inconsequential whether the character grows personally from the experience with death, from another character who dies, or from the adult reactions to death. What is of consequence is whether or not the adolescent character does indeed learn something about people, life, and most importantly, himself. The author must allow a natural growth to take place in the character as the circumstances develop. The novels that focus on death do not necessarily have to end with all conflicts clearly resolved. The most successful ones show the character as a more fully developed person, whatever the unresolved questions may be. Thus, the young reader is left with the optimistic outlook that people of all ages are able to learn and to live with the inevitability of death, given an opportunity to sort out feelings and put the experience into perspective.■

Trends in German Youth Literature

Joan Stidham Nist, Auburn University

The research for this report was done on a stipendiate grant to the International Youth Library, Munich, June–August 1979. Acknowledgement is made to Dr. Walter Scherf, Director; Mr. Jess Moransee, Assistant Director; Mr. Gerd Rumler, German section librarian; Mrs. Skip Welch, U.S.–Scandinavian sections librarian; and many others at the Library for their generous help.

YOUTH LITERATURE IN GERMANY HAS flourished as part of the resurgence of that country in the past thirty years. In 1981, the German Youth Book Prize (Deutscher Jugendbuchpreis) will celebrate its 25th anniversary. The first awards, in 1956, set a pattern which has continued: works in various categories are cited, and translations are eligible as well as works originally composed in German. That first year, an "Amerikanisch" book, *Der gluckliche Löwe* (*The Happy Lion,* by Louis Fatio, illustrated by Roger Duvoisin, translated by Fritz Mühlenweg) was chosen for the "Kinderbuchpreis." The following year *Das Rad auf der Schule* (Meindert de Jong's *The Wheel on the School,* translated by Katrin and Richard Kaufmann) was the award winner.

The categories have since been refined to include "Bilderbücher" (picture books), "Kinderbücher" (children's books), "Jugendbücher" (young adult books), and "Sachbücher" (information books). In addition, there are special awards ("Sonderpreis"/"Prämien"). Translations accounted for almost 45% of the prize books in the first twenty years (34 of 76), with American books far in the lead (18); together with British books (4), they represented 29% of the prize winners (*20 Jahre Deutscher Jugendbuchpreis,* edited by Rudolf Majonica, München: Arbeitskreis für Jugendliteratur, 1976).

The "Auswahl" books (select titles, or honor books) from the years 1956-1975 are a much larger group of works than those which were awarded the prizes. This collection likewise shows that only 50% were originally written in German. Such books include Austrian and German Swiss books as well as those from West Germany. Again, translations from the English language were by far the most prominent of all translations: 29.4%. For example, in the "Jugendbücher" (young adult) category, honored books ranged as follows: German: 118, 44%; American: 71, 26%; English: 30, 11%; Dutch: 11, 4%. The only other languages from which a half dozen or more works came were the following: French: 9; Czech: 8; and Swedish: 6. Interestingly, in the most recent year of selection – 1979 – there were more "Auswahl" books from Great Britain than the United States; the English-language contribution was down to 18% while the German works rose to 68%. If these tendencies continue, they may indicate new preferences, not only for the books of a Common Market European partner rather than a transatlantic ally, but also for the growing number of books created in their own language, reflecting their own ambience.

A critical assessment of German youth literature in the past year (Gerd F. Rumler, *Kinder- und Jegendliteratur in Deutscher Sprache,* München: Internationale Jugendbibliothek, 1979) points to three trends. First, there is a growth in emphasis by authors and their publishers upon the literary quality of works so that themes are presented aesthetically rather than didactically. Second, fantasy is on the upsurge, not so much in märchen-like stories as in socially relevant novels with realistic points of reference. Third, in theme and expression, the so-called boundaries between "children's," "youth," and "grown-up" literature are becoming permeable ("durchlässig"); there has been an advance toward "literarisch Integration" through such boundaries, evident not only in the newer materials of certain publishers but also in specially developed programs for young adults ("junge Erwachsene").

Two examples of recent problem novels ("Problemromanen") which appeal to the adolescent audience are Rudolf Herfurtner's *Hard Rock* and Dagmar Chidolue's *Fieber oder der Abschied der Gabriele Kupinski (Fever or the Farewell of Gabriele Kupinski).* Herfurtner takes his hero Poppy Vogeler through the Munich rock music scene, presenting "a realistic, disillusioning and occasionally ironic account of the commercial side of the rock business, with its 'outsiders' and 'insiders,' their big talk and fantastic plans, which only seldom, of course, materialize into action, and at the same time [presenting] a convincing account of a young man in search of his identity and his future."

Chidolue shows 19-year-old Gabriele smothered in a small town atmosphere. Rebelling against her parents' sole goal – securing her a "good" marriage – she leaves home and her "pleasant" job as tax clerk to seek independence in the big city (Frankfurt). The book "succeeds in its depiction of the brittle, oppressive, 'proper' milieu; through this depiction the author lets the reader participate directly and vividly in the untold, sometimes agonizing, difficulties of the heroine's self-discovery."

The setting for a number of recent German youth novels has been the time of World War II. Many of the authors were themselves young during the Nazi years and write from their own backgrounds. Much of the material on Hitler's Third Reich which is accessible to young people has been provided by these writers. Dr. Hans Gärtner of the University of Munich, in an article in *Concepte* (April 1979), a journal of social ethics, has warned of the lack of knowledge on the part of young Germans about "Die Zeit, die uns nie entlassen wird" ("The Time Which Will Never Let Us Free"). A recent study conducted among students, *"Was Ich über Adolf Hitler gehört habe . . . "* (*"What I Have Heard About Adolf Hitler . . . ,"* Fischer, 1977), corroborates "the shocking lack of information among children and youth about National Socialism (Naziism)."

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Female Identity in the Young Adult Novel

Myra L. Kibler, Clemson University

THE ADOLESCENT NEED TO DEVELOP A concept of individual identity has made the search for self a common theme in literature written for the young adult. One of the problems posed by many such works is the question, "What constitutes manhood?" Since the society at large has never been sure of the answer to that question, the search is all the more difficult. It is a complex problem which can intrigue philosophers as well as young adults. But young readers in the throes of personal identity crises take a special and rather subjective interest in the theme.

An additional problem arises in relation to female identity. In recent years the society has become even less sure about what constitutes female identity. One would think this uncertainty might stimulate writers to explore new ground, and in adult literature, it has. But young adult literature seems to be a more conservative field. In Victorian novels marrying well was the main identity problem for females. If Angie Morrow's assessment in *Seventeenth Summer* is valid, concepts had not changed much by 1942:

> It's funny what a boy can do. One day you're a nobody and the next day you're the girl that some fellow goes with and the other fellows look at you harder and wonder what you've got and wish that they'd been the one to take you out first. And the girls say hello and want you to walk down to the drugstore to have Cokes with them because the boy who likes you might come along and he might have other boys with him. Going with a boy gives you a new identity.

That was 1942. Surely by 1969 in a book that deals with teenage pregnancy, one might find a change in attitude. And yet, in Paul Zindel's *My Darling, My Hamburger,* Maggie blossoms from an insecure, pudgy girl who has crooked eyebrows and wears unattractive clothing into a rather self-possessed, attractive, even slim and well-dressed young lady, all because of her relationship with Dennis Holowitz. Paul Zindel should not be singled out for feminist criticism. Many books on the shelves for adolescent reading subscribe to the idea that by age sixteen or seventeen, a female's primary developmental task is to be able to attract the attentions of a worthy male. Certainly achieving a feminine social role is one of the adolescent's tasks, and many high school girls do equate that task with attracting a male and subordinate all other concerns to it. It would be too restrictive for teachers, critics, or publishers to specify any particular concept of female identity as proper for the young adult audience, and yet those who have a concern for young adolescent literature should be aware of the problem and should look at the way books present female identity. In a time when society itself is changing so rapidly, the best that teachers and librarians can do is offer a variety of perspectives on the reading shelf. I would not argue for banning *Seventeenth Summer* or censuring Paul Zindel, but I would hope to include and call attention to some other views.

Robert Cormier is one author who offers a refreshing alternative to Maggie and her ilk. Known for flaunting formulas and writing honestly, Cormier produces works too strong for some adults who still try to offer youth a protected image of reality. But out of the same integrity that turns stomachs in *The Chocolate War* comes a beautiful portrait of a girl in the character of Kate Forrester in *After the First Death.* Cormier does not evade the sexual attraction issue. Kate and Miro develop an interest in each other that Cormier expected would become a love story (*Alan Review,* Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 31). But yielding to the forces at work in the novel, he wrote it differently. The point should be made clearly that sexual attraction or not is irrelevant; female identity, like male identity involves sexuality but is not to be reduced to sexuality.

In *After the First Death* the catalyst for self-awareness and identity-achievement is the crisis situation in which Kate must summon all her resources for her own survival and that of the children on the school bus. The problems she confronts – the conflict between her desire for personal survival and her feeling of responsibility for the children, her effort to penetrate the mental machinations of a terrorist and subvert them, her consciousness of the weakness of her own body – all suggest that her achievement can best be seen in full-fledged human terms, a concept of identity that goes beyond sexuality.

Another writer who presents a female protagonist without making her identity relative to the male is Robert O'Brien in *Z for Zachariah.* Ann Burden, isolated in a protected valley after a nuclear holocaust, yearns for companionship, especially for a male with whom she might reinact the garden of Eden scenario. Instead, her valley is invaded by a demented scientist who takes over her home and hunts her for the purpose of enslaving her. She, like Kate Forrester, must use keen wits to override some basic instincts and to analyze the workings of her antagonist's mind. She understands from having played chess with her father, the advantage of taking the offense, and she uses this knowledge in her bid for survival.

Both Kate Forrester and Ann Burden offer to the adolescent reader models of female identity that go beyond the strutting and posturing of the female whose sole purpose is the attraction of a male. Granted, Kate and Ann are both conscious of their appearance and have concern for their effect on males, but their identities are not dependent on it. This important distinction sets them apart from many other female protagonists. Both characters were presented in life-and-death situations. This similarity raises the question of whether a realistic portrait of a non-stereotype female can be done in a normal social setting. It may also be noted appreciatively that Kate and Ann are creations of male writers, though perhaps readers may know of other characters their equal who are created by female writers.

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These are some of the things I was thinking about when I wrote *Up in Seth's Room.* Finn Rousseau is young, 15, but a strong character. She doesn't feel ready for what Seth, the 19-year-old boy she loves, wants. Seth puts on the pressure. Is it the old girl-says-no, girl-loses-boy situation? I hated the thought! If these kids loved each other, why couldn't they figure out something to do that would make them both happy and not violate Finn's feelings about herself? At first I didn't know what that was. (Who says I'm that smart?) Then, as I let my characters fight it out, I found out, and so did they. I hope I've let my readers in on something, not only a love story, but something they can think about for their own lives. ■

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(p. 63). Certainly, *Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff* is a well-rounded portrait of blacks dealing with life problems and would be appropriate for majority youngsters and teachable by majority instructors. The teaching of *Fast Sam,* as opposed to *It Ain't All for Notbin'*, might lead majority students to a better understanding of themselves and their minority brothers and sisters instead of presenting a highly selective picture of the life and problems of some Black Americans. In the teaching of minority adolescent literature to majority students, discretion is the better part of valor. We must exercise care in the choice of material: We cannot, in our commitment to teaching minority adolescent literature, be insensitive to the implications of selection and readership.

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**With thanks to Dr. Rosalie Black Kiah, Associate Professor of Education, Norfolk State University, Norfolk, Virginia.* ■

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The Hitler era is inadequately treated in history instruction; as one thirteen-year-old responded: "I have as yet never heard anything about Hitler, because I was not yet living at that time, and also no one has ever told me anything about him." German publishers are issuing not only youth novels, but also biographical works and informational books on the Third Reich. The first young people's biography series (Dressler) includes a volume on Hitler (1978) and one on Carl von Ossietzky (1978), the Nobel Peace Prize laureate who defied Hitler only to die from prison-camp illness. (World opinion had forced Hitler to release him shortly before his death.) Another much-discussed recent book, by Horst Burger, used the provocative title *Vieu Fragen an meinen Vater: warum warst du in der Hitlerjugend? (Four Questions to My Father: Why Were You in the Hitler Youth?* Ensslin & Laiblin, 1976).

Unfortunately, very few German books are available to American readers, since only a handful are ever translated and adopted by American publishers. To be sure, German books have dominated the Batchelder Award (for translated children's literature), receiving the citation for six of the Award's thirteen years. But few teachers and librarians, much less young readers, have heard of the Award or know the prize-winning books. The German Youth Book Prize, with its dominance of English translations, and the Batchelder Award, with its dominance of German translations, both attest to what Mary Ørvig, secretary of the International Research Society for Children's Literature, has called "ancient cultural links on the translation scene," in this case between the English-speaking and the German-speaking peoples.

Mildred Batchelder of the American Library Association, for whom the Award is named, believed that interchange of young people's books would be a means of communication between peoples and a beginning toward international understanding. It is obvious that German young people are being given opportunity, through translations, to become acquainted with books their American counterparts know well, even if by quite different titles: *Jetzt und hier* (literally, "Now and Here": Hinton's *That Was Then, This Is Now); Das haben wir nicht gewollt* ("That, We Have Not Intended": Zindel's *The Pigman*); and *Ich bin das, was übrigbleibt* ("I Am What Is Left Over": Cormier's *I Am the Cheese*).

American young people, however, are missing German books like those by Herfurtner and Chidolue because of a paucity of translations. John Donovan, executive director of the Children's Book Council, recently stated the situation *(School Library Journal,* December 1979): "For the last decade . . . there were years in which there were less than a dozen translated children's books published in the United States, and there has not been a year in which as many 75 translations have appeared. . . . American children read a body of books that may be more parochial than those read by children anywhere in the developed world." Hopefully, adolescent literature in the United States will grow along the lines of other countries like Germany, which provide a range of international reading choices for their readers. ■

ALAN WORKSHOP PLANNED

The sixth ALAN workshop held in conjunction with NCTE's national convention promises to be as exciting as the five that preceded it. It is scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, November 24 and 25, in the convention center. The fee is $30.00 for NCTE members and $35.00 for nonmembers. Registration will be available on site, but only people who preregister can be guaranteed a packet of books and other workshop materials.

Featured authors will be Walter Wangerin, Jr., Ouida Sebestyen, Sue Ellen Bridgers, and Paula Danziger. Ann Irwin and Lee Hadley, co-authors under the name of Hadley Irwin of *The Lilith Summer*, published by The Feminist Press, and Dean Hughes, author of *Under the Same Stars*, published by The Deseret Book Company, will participate in a panel discussion about their experiences in publishing adolescent novels through non-establishment presses. Another interesting panel presentation will focus on "The Creation of Literature Anthologies for Classroom Use." Participants are Leo Kneer, Ted Hipple, Tom Gage, and Ruth Ann Peck.

Bridging the gap between librarians and reading and English teachers will be speakers Audrey Eaglen, president of the Young Adult Services Division of ALA and editor of *Top of the News*, and Mary K. Chelton, a former YASD president and now co-editor of *Voice of Youth Advocates*. The full schedule also includes small group discussions on a variety of topics.

ALAN members acting as group leaders for these include Hazel Davis, Connie Decker, Jackie Cronin, Joanne Flowers, Hugh Agee, Ellen S.Kester, Dick Abrahamson, Elizabeth M. Kenney, Donald J. Kenney, Brenda Bruno, Beverly Haley, William W. Young, Natalie Brooks, Alan McLeod, Linda Waddle, and Alan Stacy.

Other leaders include Helen Painter, Mary Sucher, and Richard Ammon. Program chairs are Ken Donelson and Alleen Nilsen.

The program will conclude with a wine and cheese autograph party in honor of the participating authors. Bantam Books is host.

SCHWARTZ WRITES COLUMN

Sheila Swartz now has a regular weekly column on Young Adult books which runs in the *Poughkeepsie Journal*, one of the Gannett chain. The editor hopes the column will go to syndication.

BUSINESS MEETING SET

The ALAN business meeting will be held Saturday afternoon, November 22nd, from 5:00 to 6:00 as part of the scheduled activities of the NCTE meeting in Cincinnati.

ANNUAL BREAKFAST MEETING SET

The annual ALAN breakfast meeting will be held on Saturday, November 22, at 7:30 a.m. in Stouffer's Hotel in Cincinnati. Awards for outstanding contributions to adolescent literature will be made, and installation of officers for 1980-81 will be held. Following the breakfast, Robert Lipsyte, author of such books as *One Fat Summer* and *The Contender*, will speak to the group. A full breakfast is planned.

Tickets for the Breakfast are $7.50 each and can be ordered by sending a check to Alethea Helbig, English Department, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197. Checks should be made out to ALAN. ***Mail deadline is November 2.*** Tickets requested after November 2 will not be mailed. Instead, they will be held at the door of the breakfast. Requests for tickets through the mail after November 10 cannot be honored; the money will be refunded. The only guarantee of having a ticket is to purchase it in advance. ***No tickets will be available for sale in Cincinnati.*** They must be purchased by mail.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CONFERENCE SCHEDULED

"Children's Books: From Creation to Criticism" is the theme for the Children's Literature Association 8th annual conference to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota March 27-29, 1981. The call for papers and deadline of November 15, 1980, have been announced by John Cech, Department of English, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611. (904) 393-6650.

For information and registrations materials for the conference, write Dr. Virginia Wolf, English Department, University of Wisconsin–Stout, Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751. The local sponsors of the conference are the University of Minnesota and Minneapolis Public Library and Information Center.

HUMOR CONFERENCE SET

Date: April 1, 1982 — April Fool's Day
Deadline for Proposals: July 4, 1981
Sponsored by:
Western Humor & Irony Membership (WHIM)
Theme: The Language of Humor and the Humor of Language

Travel Details: Skyharbor Airport serves ASU and the Phoenix Valley with the following airlines: Air India, Air New Zealand, American, Braniff International, CP Air, Cochise, Continental, Delta, Desert, Eastern, Frontier, Hughes, Japan, Pan Am, TWA, US Air (Allegheny), Varig Brazilian, and Western. Limousine service will be available to all convention hotels. If you're interested in participating in or attending the humor conference, please contact:

Don L. F. Nilson, Chair, 1982 WHIM Conference, English Department, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85281.

BEYOND BOOKS — Media for the Classroom

Dan Ward, Georgia State Department of Education

WHAT IF . . .
What if . . . a thoroughly dominated husband awakened one morning to find a unicorn in the garden?
What if . . . some boor mistook *Macbeth* for a murder mystery?
What if . . . a worthless, disgusting, unsanitary, no good, low down, unregenerate cretin captured the imagination and adoration of the world? Thurber only knows.

In its second round of The American Short Story series, Perspective Films offers Thurber's satiric answer to the latter question as one of its eight film additions. Jack Smurch, Thurber's miserable miscreant and 'The Greatest Man in the World,' comes to life in Perspective's production at his drooling, ill-behaved worst. (Smurch is a creature so unique in his lack of redemptive qualities that the ark's company could have sailed without him blessing all the while the just god who had refused to make a second of that species.) Staying one step ahead of the health department, little Jackie manages, in spite of his mother's prayers for failure, to make aviation history and to earn the disgust and dismay of the few knowing representatives of respectability. The anticipation of Smurch's success and the crisis which follows from it allows Thurber to use the hatpin of satire on one institutional bubble after another: the press which distorts, alters, and finally fabricates facts to avoid nauseous reality; the government that demonstrates an insensitivity to truth, to ethical behavior and to the law that is worthy of Watergate; the hero who is simply a *bona fide* wretch; the vulgar masses that cannot discriminate between a great deed and a great man. Perspective's presentation of Thurber's "The Greatest Man in the World" offers a clever, cinematic introduction to satire that could easily be a part of an extended genre study which might include works such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* and other works by writers such as Washington Irving, Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut, or James Thurber. (James Thurber's "The Greatest Man in the World" fr. Perspective Films, 369 West Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610 / Toll Free 800-621-2131; 16 mm or video; c; 51 min; $785 sale / $65 rent.)

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Willa Cather's "Paul's Case" also from the new series is quite different. I am indebted to Mr. Tom Liner (teacher of English at Gainesville High School, Georgia) for the following review.

Haunting. That's the word for "Paul's Case." Like a persistent ghost, it won't leave me alone. Images, scenes from the film, stick somewhere behind my eyeballs and won't be shaken loose. And that surprises me because I've taught Cather's story dozens of times. While the story itself is certainly powerful — and subtle — visually, I did not expect a film that was as faithful to the source as those of The American Short Story series to hold any surprises. But the film is as powerful and disturbing as the story. Perhaps even more so.

Images . . . Paul's face shifting like a desperate chamelion confronting the teachers, his face dreaming at the opera, his face held in the train window reflecting only itself, the opulent and gaudy room at the Waldorf, and finally the image of red flowers in the snow and the film's slightly ambiguous ending. Much of the power of the film comes from Eric Robert's acting. In a difficult role with little dialogue, he *is* Paul, in one of the most impressive performances by a young actor that I've seen.

Director Lamont Johnson's use of the camera is traditional, almost antique: it fits the story well and there are flashes of brilliance, especially in his close work. Like most American Short Story films, I can teach this one as a film or for its haunting perspective on Cather's story.

There are enough plot and thematic similarities between "Paul's Case" and other works to offer an interesting array of teaching combinations; for example Thomas Wolfe's "The Lost Boy" from *The Hills Beyond* offers a good companion, as do Jewett's "The White Heron," Faulkner's "The Bear," Anderson's "I'm A Fool," and Wright's "Almos' A Man." (The last two are also films from the original series.) Those pieces which focus on attempts by young adults to grapple with circumstances they know or they believe are inappropriate for them would mesh well with this film. (Willa Cather's "Paul's Case" fr. Perspective Films, 369 West Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610 / Toll Free 800-621-2131; 16mm or video; C; 54 min.; $785 sale / $65 rent.)

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What if . . . you could live to be 67 (more or less) and never leave your teens or suffer from acne or experience an impure thought. Besides being the only one at your 50th reunion who still looked like the senior portraits, you could be uniformly hated by your contemporaries — unless they too had remained unchanged, unless they too were a part of the same literary *Brigadoon.*

But that's exactly what Carolyn Keene's (a.k.a. Stratemeyer Syndicate) Nancy Drew has accomplished and SVE has decided to see what fifty years of success can do for sound/strip kits. The *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* offers four audio-cassette/filmstrips, each with a single adventure: *The Secret Clock, Nancy's Mysterious Letter, The Mysterious Mannequin,* and *The Sky Phantom.* Sound/strips are approximately six to eight minutes and 56 to 65 frames. The transparencies are photographs with captions, i.e., a

print script appears on the frame and matches the audio to provide read along capability.

The series is designed to stimulate reading and offers, along with captioning, specific suggestions for teaching inference, characterization, cause/effect relationships and time order. The intended audience is upper intermediate/junior high school students while the reading level is maintained at third/fourth grade. This might be just the thing to reach and to interest those reluctant readers who are not attracted to male or ghetto oriented materials; it might lead some to read the adventures of a young woman who has enjoyed youth and success for fifty years. (Carolyn Keene's *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* fr. Society for Visual Education, Inc., 1345 Diversy Parkway, Chicago Illinois 60614 / toll free 800-621-1900; $87 sale.)

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WHAT IF . . . YOU HAD A TEENAGED son or daughter and you were concerned about the problems of young people in a time of increasing sexual awareness and equally increasing sexual ignorance.

I am indebted to Mr. David Muschell and his English classes at Greensboro High School, Georgia, for their reactions and his review of the following two films.

The screen flickers dimly as *Not My Problem* opens; in the darkness we see a parked van and hear voice of a young couple. Their faces seen in the semi-darkness express frustration and anxiety. In the school media center conference room, my students have been leaning forward, wide-eyed from the opening shot. A few giggle, but others shush them to better hear the soft conversation that strikes such real chords. The scene is tasteful. In the following sequence, Bill is returning the borrowed van to his brother with the inevitable dent in the side panel and the ensuing verbal exchange over lack of responsibility.

These opening scenes set the tone for a very realistic film on teenage pregnancy. The film avoids preaching about the responsbility of the adolescents involved; *Not My Problem* merely shows, honestly, the various viewpoints on the question. Of course, the message of the film is that both young people should share the responsibility in pregnancy, but it is not said with the loud voice of adult authority.

After Bill learns that Sue might be pregnant, he discusses it with friends. His baseball buddies offer a range of comments: "Hey, it's her problem; she should have had birth control"; "My brother got a girl pregnant—they got married"; "My father left after I was born, and I wouldn't want to do that to my kid." Sue phones and asks Bill to come with her to the clinic, but Bill makes excuses. His life has so many possibilities, and he begins to see them crash around him before he can finish high school. Sue goes to the clinic alone, and then confronts Bill at the baseball field.

All test results are still unsure, but Bill symbolically gives up his turn at bat and leaves the field to talk to Sue. Throughout the film, talk of responsibility is emphasized in side-issues; the dent in the van, getting to practice on time, doing homework. This low key reinforcement focuses the main issue and opens wide the post-film discussion.

My students responded enthusiastically to the film; it provided an avenue for their thoughts. The opening "van scene" led to talk about how boys sometimes pressure girls to have sex. "I had a date who just let me out and made me walk two miles home because I wouldn't – you know." The topic of birth control responsibilities for both sexes was brought up. The theme of *Not My Problem* was depicted more honestly by the filmmaker than I had ever before encountered. This is a distinct advantage. Many teen pregnancy books and films show the sad and lonely female struggle while the cocky uncaring male swaggers off with his friends. Often young men cannot or will not identify with this callous depiction or its opposite, the guilt-ridden portrayal. *Not My Problem* approaches the male side of the dilemma realistically. The cocky male on the baseball squad, who recommends sex for all, is "put down" by the team star whose talk is more mature and reflects responsibility and education.

My students could and did talk about the problem more openly than I had heard before. I recommend the film highly. It is an appropriate item to include with works or in courses that consider teenage sexuality. It is equally appropriate for teachers and school media personnel whose students are reading material which treat the same subject, such as *You Would If You Loved Me, Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones, Don't Look and It Won't Hurt, My Darling, My Hamburger*, (the list gets to be rather lengthy), or whose students are watching the 6:00 news specials on the teenage pregnancy epidemic or the 11:00 submarine races out at the lake on lover's lane. (*Not My Problem* fr. Barr Films, P.O.B. 5667, Pasadena, CA 91107 /213-793-6553; 16mm; C; 18 min; $320 sale.)

* * * * *

Also from Barr but on a different note is "The Interlopers" based on the short story by H. H. Munro (Saki). The acting is a little pedestrian; however, Barr Film's "The Interlopers" does faithfully recreate Saki's short story with some tension and the complete shock of the ending.

The photography is excellent, panoramic shots are juxtaposed with nature closeups in this recounting of a family land feud. The leaders stubbornly enter the disputed land in search of one another. The film slows as each stalks the other through the woods, approaching their destined meeting. Their meeting and entrapment together brought me some relief; my students had been getting restless. However, attention was riveted on the accident and its ironic implications.

The film's two actors have their moment; unfortunately, they do not evoke the emotions with quite enough believability. One offers wine as a gesture of peace and is rejected. Finally, less gallantly the friendship pact is re-offered and accepted. They share the small flask, passed painfully under tree limbs. Shouts for assistance from the new friends attract others. At the last in a truly chilling moment, we see wolves running for the pair – freeze frame and end.

The students are caught up in the events as they should be by the story. The strange ending, the final irony, is the focus of student attention. Why the wolves? It looks as though a "ride into the sunset" might be appropriate. This is the film's greatest value, a visual venture into ironic fiction.

The immediate reading of Saki's original or another such as "Open Window" or one from O. Henry is recommended. This film encourages students to look again; they want to backtrack; they know the events; but the second look is compelling. Reading the original receives high attention.

The film is short enough to see, talk about and then begin reading its print parent in the same class period. The award-winning performance of a more expensive production is lacking, but this film is a strong stimulus to exploring the short story from many directions. (H.H. Munro's (Saki) "The Interlopers" fr. Barr Films, P.O.B. 5667, Pasadena, CA 91107 / 213-793-6153; 16 mm; C; 24 min; $395 sale).

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What if . . . you meshed 19th century American poetry and 19th century French woodcuts with 20th century cinematography? What if you married form and medium with technology? The French would probably have a phrase for it and someone else a law against it, but Studio 44 has a nice little film instead, "The Raven."

Poe's oft' anthologized poem is read by director James Mather as the camera moves across the original woodcuts of Gustave Doré. Doré's continental appreciation of Poe's work and his own artistic technique take on a new life in the lens of Dallas Dorsett's camera. The grim, forboding, maddningness of Poe's "Raven" is visually developed in Doré's woodcuts with a seriousness, a passion and a fatalism that could only come from a near contemporary residing in France, the nation most receptive to Poe's poetry. All the dreamy madness of Poe appears in Doré's cuts; the filmmakers have only to resuscitate the life and movement Doré gave his blocks but could not give their final, inked prints. It's an interesting marriage and an added dimension to a poem that has survived time and change to find an audience in each succeeding generation.

The film has possibilities for teaching poetry, American literature, interdisciplinary studies, cross cultural studies, and filmmaking. It could be a valuable addition to junior high school, high school, or district level media collections. (Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven": by Studio 44 fr. National Film and Video Center, 1425 Liberty Road, Suite 200, Elderburg, MD 21784 / toll free 800-638-1688; 16mm or video; B&W; 8 min; $195 sale).

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Of course, you can carry this "what if" business too far, for example Guy Ellis wanted to know "what if . . . you had an editor who couldn't meet a deadline, never had met a deadline, and wasn't likely to ever meet a deadline?"

I don't know; maybe I'd make a movie. ▪

Kibler, continued from page 25

Ultimately, all we can ask of writers is that they write honestly—that they present the world as they see it or that the world they create be clearly distinct from reality. And of teachers, librarians, and parents we can ask that they make available a wide range of reading experiences for young adults, including alternatives to a sex role stereotyping.

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RICOCHET – Readers React

Dear Editor:

By all rights I should be satisfied with Shelton Root's review (Winter, 1980) of the *Texas Tech Journal of Education* 7:1 1980) special issue on adolescent literature. It was in many ways, a most positive and insightful review, with issue taken on only one article—Richard Maynard's "Some Limitations of Adolescent Literature," which Root termed "a disaster." A reviewer has his prerogatives, but I can't let it go at that because I feel that Maynard's article was victimized by a negative predisposition towards "school magazines" that Root reveals most directly in his comment:

> By his own admission, he (Maynard) "First became aware of adolescent literature in 1976. . . ." when, as editor of a magazine for on-level readers in grades eight through twelve" he was trying to rescue it from "its inability to speak to its teenage audience." (Was it ever such with school magazines).

Root further observes that "the subject was not an appropriate one for him." This statement is puzzling because Scholastic probably publishes more adolescent literature (including the magazines) than any other publisher. Maynard must read not only Scholastic's materials but many other adolescent books, plays, etc. in order to do his job. If a Scholastic editor is not an appropriate commentator on adolescent literature, then few editors are.

On Root's behalf, however, he was reviewing page proofs and not the final product. There was a difference. Because of production delays, on the other hand, Maynard was unable to defend himself and the public was unable to read the article until two months after the review was published. As guest editor of the collection, I admire Root's straightforwardness, but at the same time also feel that this time it was misdirected.

Mike Angelotti